

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

2012-2013 Recreational Reef Fish Seasons

The reef fish fishery in the Gulf of Mexico is cooperatively managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with advice from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). Regulations promulgated by NMFS are applicable in waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the U.S., which in Louisiana is generally three miles offshore. NMFS typically requests consistent regulations in order to enhance the effectiveness and enforceability of regulations for EEZ waters.

Recreational season rules have been established for red snapper and greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico and in Louisiana state waters and both fisheries operate under recreational quotas. If the quota is projected to be reached, NMFS is required by law to close the season to restrain fishing within the established quota for the species. In conjunction with a recreational quota, a closed season has been established in the Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico for greater amberjack from June 1 through July 31 of each year.

Adoption of compatible regulations for Louisiana state waters where feasible enhances effectiveness and enforceability of the regulations already in place for reef fishes harvested in the EEZ off of Louisiana. Unforeseen circumstances may occur which may lead to modification of the recreational seasons to restrain the fisheries within the recreational quota or to allow additional harvest, requiring a modification in established regulations.

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953 which allows the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to employ emergency procedures to promulgate seasonal rules to set finfish seasons, R.S. 56:6(25) (a) and R.S. 56:326.3 which provide that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may set seasons for saltwater finfish, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby declares:

The Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is hereby authorized to close the season for the recreational harvest of red snapper or greater amberjack in Louisiana state waters if he is informed by the Regional Administrator of NMFS that the applicable recreational quota has been harvested or is projected to be harvested in the Gulf of Mexico and the recreational season closed in Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and if he is requested by the Regional Administrator of NMFS that the State of Louisiana enact compatible regulations in Louisiana state waters.

The Commission further declares that the recreational season for the harvest of greater amberjack shall be closed from June 1, 2012 through July 31, 2012.

The Commission also hereby grants authority to the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to modify the recreational season currently established in Louisiana state waters if he is informed by NMFS that the season dates for the recreational harvest of red snapper or greater amberjack in the Federal waters of the Gulf of

Mexico as set out herein have been modified, and that NMFS requests that the season be modified in Louisiana state waters, or as needed to effectively implement the provisions herein upon notification to the Chairman of the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Such authority shall extend through January 31, 2013.

Stephen W. Sagrera, Chairman
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries
Commission

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